means for accessing one or more resources available for use by the system to provide a service;

said negotiating means including a data store containing data about said system relating to a measure of the current system capacity to provide a service, and being arranged to negotiate based at least in part on said data to provide a service in response to a request; and

means to update said data about said system on the basis of the past performance of the system.

51. (New) A distributed computing environment comprising plural systems, each system being for use in providing services in a distributed processing environment, said system comprising:

an input connected to a distributed processing environment for receiving a service request from an entity;

a response output connected to said distributed processing environment for providing a response to the entity;

processing means to process the service request and provide a response thereto and adapted to decide, based at least in part on data held in an up-datable data store, whether to provide a service, to propose conditions under which the system is willing to provide a service or to decline to provide a service;

means to access the data store for storing parameter(s) indicative of the available capacity of the system to provide the service; and

wherein said plural systems are connected by a communications network and at least one of said systems is arranged to provide more than one instance of a service, or of a negotiation for a service, to one or more requesting systems concurrently; and

526594

wherein each of said systems is associated with a plurality of organizations, each of said systems having a processing means and means to access stored parameters in the up-datable data store in respect of each of its associated plurality of organizations so as to provide a virtual organization.

52.   (New) A distributed computing environment as in claim 51 wherein the virtual organization exists for a predetermined period.

53.   (New) A service provision system for use in distributed processing environments, said system comprising:

an input for receiving a service request;

service request processing means for identifying component processes for use in provisioning the requested service;

negotiation means for use in establishing conditions applicable to provision of those component processes;

an up-datable data store;

means to access said up-datable data store for storing said conditions when established; and

an output for providing a response to the service request, said response comprising an indication of availability of the requested service;

wherein the processing means is adapted to process a service request by accessing one or more of the previously established conditions in the data store, processing the request using the one or more established conditions and producing said response.

- 3 -

54.   (New) A service provision system as in claim 53 wherein one or more of said established conditions has an associated expiry time for storage in the data store.

55.   (New) A service provision system as in claim 54 wherein the processing means is adapted to detect an expired or undefined condition in the data store, which condition is applicable to a component process for the provision of a requested service, and to trigger the negotiation means to establish a substitute condition.

56.   (New) A service provision system as in claim 55 further comprising:

means to access said data store for storing data related to services offered by the system and to one or more entities which have an interest in receiving information relating to one or more of said services, together with means to transmit information based on said data related to services to the one or more entities which have an interest.

57.   (New) A system as in claim 53 which further comprises initiation means to initiate one or more component processes in provision of a requested service.

58.   (New) A service provision system as in claim 57 wherein:

provisioning a requested service requires provision of a selected set of component processes;

the negotiation means establishes and stores a set of conditions applicable to provision of the component processes of the selected set; and

the processing means is adapted to process a service request by accessing the stored set of conditions in the data store, processing the request using said stored set, and producing said response.

- 4 -

59.   (New) A service provisioning method, said method comprising:

using a programmed computer to negotiating with another entity, in response to a request from said other entity, to provide a service,

accessing one or more resources available for use by the system to provide a service,

said negotiating including use of a data store containing data relating to a measure of the current capacity to provide a service, and being arranged to negotiate based at least in part on said data to provide a service in response to a request; and

updating said data on the basis of past system performance.

60.   (New) A method for performing distributed computing using plural instances of a method for use in providing services in a distributed processing environment, said method comprising:

receiving a service request from an entity in a distributed processing environment;

processing the service request and providing a response thereto and, based at least in part on data held in the data store, determining whether to provide a service, to propose conditions under which the system is willing to provide a service or to decline to provide a service;

accessing an up-datable data store to store parameter(s) indicative of the available capacity of the system to provide the service;

wherein said plural instances are connected by a communication network, wherein at least one of said instances is arranged to provide more than one instance of a service, or of a negotiation for a service, to one or more requesting systems concurrently; and

wherein each of said method instances is associated with a plurality of organizations, each of said instances having processing and accessing stored parameters in an up-datable data

store in respect of each of its associated plurality of organizations so as to provide a virtual

organization --

Amend claim 44 as shown below:

44. (Amended) A distributed computing method as in claim 60 wherein the virtual

organization exists for a predetermined period.

526594